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Vol. 2, No. 29

Baghdad, Iraq

July 16, 2004

## Iraq, Afghanistan troop-rotation plans announced

By Jim Garamone  
American Forces  
Press Service

**WASHINGTON** — Troop levels will stay the same for the next rotations of operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, Defense Department officials said July 8.

Army Gen. John Abizaid, the commander of U.S. Central Command, has requested 138,000 troops in support of 17 brigades for Iraqi Freedom 3. He also requested about 20,000 American soldiers for Afghanistan in support of three brigades for Enduring Freedom 6.

The military has expanded the window for troop rotations into and out of the country. In fact, the so-called OIF-3 rotation really has already started. Soldiers of the 2nd Brigade, 10th Mountain

Division and Marines are beginning to flow into the region to relieve the Army's 1st Armored Division and 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment. Elements of those units were extended in country following an upsurge in violence in the so-called "Baathist Triangle" and from illegal militias in the southern part of Iraq.

The active duty and reserve units have been given a long lead time for the deployment. Army officials said the longer the lead time, the better prepared the units. Also, it allows soldiers in the reserve components to prepare their families and their employers for their absence.

"We've learned lessons from the past," said an Army spokeswoman. "We're applying them now."

The two big units in OIF-3 are

the 3rd Infantry Division, based at Fort Stewart, Ga., and the 42nd Infantry Division, of the New York National Guard. The 3rd Division will be making its second trip to Iraq. The unit was on point in March and April 2003 and took Baghdad. The 3rd Infantry Division headquarters will command two brigades of the division and the 256th Infantry Brigade of the Louisiana National Guard. The division will relieve the 1st Cavalry Division in and around Baghdad.

The other two maneuver brigades of the 3rd will come under command of the 42nd Infantry Division. Also with the 42nd will be the 116th Cavalry Brigade out of Boise, Idaho. The 42nd will relieve the 1st Infantry Division.

The 42nd Infantry will begin flowing into Iraq in December.

The 3rd Infantry will begin flowing into the country in January.

The 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, from Fort Carson, Colo., also will return to Iraq, beginning in February. The 2nd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, from Camp Hovey, South Korea, will begin flowing into Iraq next month.

The "Black Horse Cav" — the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment — will stop serving as the opposing-force training unit at the National Training Center in Fort Irwin, Calif., and will join with the 155th Armored Brigade of the Mississippi Guard. They will begin entering Iraq in January.

The 1st Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, at Fort Lewis, Wash. — the Army's second Stryker brigade — will relieve the 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division in Mosul

beginning in September.

The Tennessee Guard's 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment will roll into Iraq beginning in November. The 56th Infantry Brigade of the Texas Guard and the 29th Infantry Brigade of the Hawaii National Guard will begin providing theater security in February.

Marine units will begin their rotation in March.

In Afghanistan, the Southern European Task Force based in Vicenza, Italy, will take command from the 25th Infantry Division in March. The 173rd Airborne Brigade and elements of the 18th Airborne Corps will be part of the command. The 76th Infantry Brigade of the Indiana National Guard will take over responsibility for training the Afghan National Army at the same time.

## 'Iron' Soldiers case colors, prepare for departure

Story and photo by Staff Sgt. Tony Sailer  
1st Armored Division Public Affairs

**BAGHDAD, Iraq** — Task Force 1st Armored Division cased its banners and flags, signifying its departure from the Operation Iraqi Freedom area of operation in a brief, early-morning ceremony July 4.

The longest deployment of a division in Iraq, the 1AD spent 15 months in a combat zone. Task Force 1st Armored Division was the largest division-based task force in U.S. Army history, 1AD officials said. They said it secured some of Baghdad's roughest neighborhoods and brought stability to the city and its surrounding countryside.

Since last year, the task force protected and improved the quality of life for more than 5 million residents in Baghdad.

After turning the city over to the 1st Cavalry Division April 15, the task force headed south to pacify the cities of Najaf, Diwaniyah, Al Kut and Karbala.

"Your performance in Baghdad showed a clear indication of the kind of professionalism that Iron Soldiers have always had," Lt. Gen. Thomas Metz, the Multi-

National Corps — Iraq commander, said.

"Iron Soldiers have great discipline, great precision," Metz continued. "I can assure you that the world watched as Iron Soldiers etched a place in history during your extension. Military history will note the tremendous tactical maneuvers of the Iron Soldiers. You can be very proud of that."

The morning ceremony saw representatives from the division's units give honors to the accomplishments of its Soldiers and then roll and sheath their units' flags and guidons.

Afterward, 1AD Commander Maj. Gen. Martin Dempsey applauded his Soldiers and remarked about the significance of their accomplishments.

"Fifteen months ago," Dempsey said, "Iron Soldiers of 1AD and Dragoons of 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment formed a Task Force and set out to make the world safer for their fellow Americans and provide an opportunity for the Iraqi people to be free. They did that."

Dempsey reminded the Soldiers after handing Baghdad to the 1st Cavalry Division that his words to the Cavalry were brief and to the point: "talking ain't fighting. Let's get about that business."

The task force was to "continue mission" in a new location, he said.

"Three months ago," Dempsey continued, "the same group of soldiers were asked to remain in Iraq to defeat

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**Soldiers of the 1st Armored Division case colors and flags representing units of the 1AD task force in Iraq.**

# Airman warns of employment scam

**By Jeanne Grimes**  
Oklahoma City Air Logistics  
Center Public Affairs

**TINKER AIR FORCE BASE, Okla.** — Posting his resumé online seemed like a savvy move for one Airman here who plans to separate in August, move to Dallas and start college.

However, instead of leads to gainful employment, the experience took Senior Airman Christopher Kissell dangerously close to the unwanted role of scam victim. Now he wants his experience to be a warning to other service members re-entering the civilian work force.

"It's a terrifying situation," said Kissell, a medical administrator with the 72nd Medical Group. "How many like me are

out there? A percentage of people, I'm sure, will fall for it."

Kissell said it all began when he posted his resumé online. The resumé included the fact that he speaks Chinese.

"I got a reply from this company saying they were looking for someone to help out with international relations," he said.

That initial e-mail referred glowingly to the resumé. Kissell was informed that Chempacon GMBH, the purported company in Lautenbach, Germany, did not require him to have a college degree, just a willingness to work. The position required someone who was bilingual and experienced at working with peers in other countries.

Kissell received a condensed application to fill out and fax to

the company, which included a request for faxed copies of his driver's license and social security cards. He complied, but first he blacked out the numbers.

"All this time, I was going through an 'interview' process and would get e-mails from company contacts," he said. "They said they'd love to hire me, but wanted me to give them my social security number for tax reasons."

By then, Kissell said, warning bells were echoing in his head. He went to an online search engine, typed in Chempacon GMBH and said he was shocked at what came up.

"Every result I found warned, 'Beware. This is a scam. Job-seek fraud,'" he said.

Determined to learn more, the

Airman kept his discovery to himself and e-mailed the company, asking for a job description.

He said what came back shocked him again. This time, the company considered him gullible.

"They were going to send me foreign checks to deposit in my personal checking account," Kissell said, adding he would then send the company a wire transfer for the amount of the check, less \$600.

"I said, 'No,'" he continued. "It was my only redeeming remark."

He had already learned from his research that the checks for tens of thousands of dollars were no good and people who deposited one into their bank account and then withdrew the funds to complete the wire transfer were

held responsible for the bank's loss when the check bounced.

Kissell alerted the Air Force Office of Special Investigations and filed a fraudulent business complaint with the FBI. He also complained to employment-search Websites.

He said he believes he came away from the encounter a wiser man. As a precaution, he canceled all his credit cards and reopened accounts with new numbers.

His job search continues, but he has taken it from online to in person. On weekends, he drives to Dallas to hunt for jobs the old fashioned way.

"You have to research anytime you're looking for a job," he said. "Nothing beats a sit-down face to face with a potential employer."

## Rumsfeld expects Iraqis will help government end violence

**By John D. Banusiewicz**  
American Forces Press Service

**WASHINGTON** — As the Iraqi people become more confident in their new interim government, more of them will cooperate in the government's efforts to end the violence plaguing the country, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld said here July 7.

The secretary made his comments in a question-and-answer session with reporters after he, Secretary of State

Colin Powell and their Australian counterparts announced cooperative defense agreements between the two countries.

Rumsfeld said he believes the Iraqi people ought to feel reassured now that a sovereign Iraqi government is in place, making decisions and exercising its authority. Noting that most of the recent violence in the country is taking the lives of innocent Iraqi men, women and children, the secretary said he expects that the Iraqi people will increase the pressure to bring it to an end.

"It seems to me that at a certain point, the Iraqi people

will decide that they're against that," Rumsfeld said, "and that they will be supportive of the government." The secretary added that he believes Iraqis increasingly will dissuade people from engaging in the insurgency and will report those who do to the Iraqi authorities so the country's security forces can take appropriate action.

The secretary said it's too early to tell what role U.S. or multinational forces will play in any given area or situation in Iraq under new security measures adopted by the Iraqi government.

## 1AD *Continued from Page One*

a militia uprising and preserve the path to an Iraqi sovereignty. They did that, too. I hope you are as proud of what you have accomplished as I am of you."

Among the task force's accomplishments during its 15 months of duty are planning and executing Operations Iron Hammer, Iron Justice, Iron Grip, Longstreet, Iron Bullet, Iron Promise and Iron Saber. During these task force operations, Soldiers captured more than 700 criminals and former regime insurgents. They also confiscated thousands of rockets, mortars, tank rounds, rocket-propelled grenades and small arms.

1AD task force Soldiers also supervised an estimated \$2 billion in community improvements in Baghdad, rebuilt the infrastructure and restored public utilities, facilities and services. They also refurbished war-damaged buildings and repaired roads.

Those missions and achievements will be symbolized by a battle streamer

attached to the division's colors, Dempsey said.

"The colors we have just cased are part of what defines us," Dempsey said. "Sometime soon we will add a battle streamer to those colors. That simple strip of silk will represent many things.

"It will represent more than a year of your life. It will represent your 135 fellow soldiers who gave their lives for this mission and who made the journey home ahead of us. It will represent your great courage in battle. It will represent your remarkable stamina over these past 15 months.

"It will represent your unshakable honor tested in the most complex environment imaginable. It will represent your immeasurable sacrifice and that of your families.

"Forever more it will represent you," Dempsey said. "These are truly your colors now. You have earned the right to stand tall behind them."

## Finance agency opens new Reserve pay center

**Submitted by American Forces Press Service**

**WASHINGTON** — The Defense Department's new Reserve Pay Center of Excellence has officially opened for business.

The operation, part of Defense Finance and Accounting Service, will further improve service "to the men and women who defend America," according to a DFAS news release.

It will offer "better productivity" to a "key military customer group," the release said.

The move centralizes payroll activities for all Army and Air Force National Guard and reserve elements, as well as the Naval Reserve, in Cleveland.

DFAS said it expects "significant" productivity gains from running these operations from an established, centralized pay-support site.

"DFAS is constantly striving to improve the way it serves its cus-

tomers," said Pat Shine, the director of the agency's military and civilian pay services business line.

"The Reserve Pay Center of Excellence will make us even more responsive to the needs of a critical component of America's defense — the Reserve and Guard," he said.

According to the release, centralized pay and customer-service operations began for the Air Force Reserve in May. The Air National Guard, Army Reserve and Army National Guard accounts will follow.

The Cleveland center already had been servicing the Naval Reserve before the consolidation.

The new center's opening didn't cause any job loss. Reserve and Guard Denver workers "have been reassigned to other high-priority military pay tasks," noted the release.

"No loss of jobs will occur," the release said, when Army National Guard and Reserve functions move from Indianapolis.

**Service members are encouraged to submit stories and photographs to the Scimitar.**  
Email your submissions to  
[cpiccmdinfo@baghdadforum.com](mailto:cpiccmdinfo@baghdadforum.com)



# Gov't enforcing reemployment rights

By Kathleen T. Rhem  
American Forces Press Service

**WASHINGTON** — Several government agencies are working together to aggressively defend the reemployment rights of reserve-component service members.

Under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994, reserve and National Guard troops cannot lose their jobs or their benefits due to military service.

In other words, reservists and Guardsmen who are deployed are guaranteed their previous civilian jobs or similar jobs with the same level of benefits when they return. Employers who fail to comply are in violation of federal law and can be sued by the U.S. government.

U.S. Special Counsel Scott J. Bloch is

charged with prosecuting federal agencies that fail to comply with the tenets of USERRA. Bloch visited the Pentagon July 8 to pledge his vigilance in these duties. He signed a statement of support for the Guard and reserves on behalf of federal employers.

Leaders of the National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve and the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs spoke at the ceremony.

Assistant Defense Secretary for Reserve Affairs Thomas Hall compared the overwhelming support for today's troops with his own days as a Sailor during the Vietnam era. Hall said that in 21 months in his current position, he has had the opportunity to speak to at least 120,000 people around the country and abroad.

"Everywhere I go, I find a different

spirit than perhaps existed in my younger years in the Navy. ... Controversy rocked the country, and many of our young men and women who came back from Vietnam ... weren't welcomed," Hall said.

"But what is not lacking today," he said, "is support from the rank and file, from the businesses and from the community."

ESGR's national director, Bob G. Hollingsworth, told those gathered, "America's employers have rallied around (the troops) in an incredible way." The employers realize "they are inextricably linked to the national defense of our nation," he said.

Hall explained in an interview that employers of reserve-component troops are vital to the future of the National Guard and reserves and, thus, America's interests. "It's very key to young men and women having the confidence and their

families having the confidence that when they go off to answer the call to colors, when they return they will have a job waiting for them," he said.

Bloch is especially committed to serving as an advocate for service members because his son, 19-year-old Marine Lance Cpl. Michael Bloch, is preparing to leave his home base of Twentynine Palms, Calif., for a second rotation in Iraq.

"As a member of the administration, I support USERRA," Bloch said before signing the statement of support. "But I also support it as a citizen and as a father of an active-duty Marine."

Our commitment, he said "is the least that we can do to send a message to our wonderfully brave, talented and committed members of the military that we do support them and we do understand the sacrifices they're making."

## Rewritten Airman's Manual coming this month

By Tech. Sgt. David A. Jablonski  
Air Force Print News

**WASHINGTON** — An Airman's most important deployment tool just got better.

The original Air Force Manual 10-100, the "Airman's Manual," published in 1999, has been revised and updated and hits the streets Monday.

"Within four weeks, we will distribute more than 675,000 copies to every active-duty member, reservist and guardsman," said David Epstein, the training and publications manager for the Air Force civil engineer readiness branch. An electronic version is already available on the Air Force portal.

A working group of contract writers and active-duty subject-matter experts from a cross section of Air Force

specialties began the revision in October. The manual was completed in January and went to press June 9.

One major improvement combines the manual with Air Force Handbook 32-4014, Volume 4, "USAF Ability to Survive and Operate Procedures in a Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Environment." This consolidated the two publications from 400 pages to about 250 and put them both into one easy-to-carry booklet that fits into the battle dress uniform pants cargo pocket.

Another important feature is the addition of about 20 pages of potential life-saving information, Steve Prier said. He is the Full Spectrum Threat Response publication manager and program manager for the Airman's Manual at the Air Force Civil Engineer Support Agency at Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla. It can even be read using night-vision goggles.

"The experts reviewed each section to ensure accuracy, then added essential information from lessons learned from operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, or any other items they found to be important over past five years," Prier said.

The team visited Lackland AFB, Texas, to test the draft manual on basic-training graduates who recently completed Warrior Week.

Every bluesuiter will get a copy of the manual, with deployed and deploying Airmen getting their copies first through their unit deployment managers. Certain emergency-essential civilians and contractors will also get them.

"It's weatherproof, tear resistant and just about indestructible," Epstein said. "It's a great medium for this compilation of existing war skills tactics, techniques and procedures."

## U.K. will stand strong with U.S. in terror fight

By Donna Miles  
American Forces Press Service

**WASHINGTON** — British Prime Minister Tony Blair defended Britain's role in Operation Iraqi Freedom before the House of Commons July 6, calling his country's close relationship with the United States essential in the fight against global terrorism and rogue regimes trying to develop weapons of mass destruction.

Blair said Britain and the United States share common values and the belief that "the best security we ultimately have is the spread of freedom and democracy and justice throughout the world."

While acknowledging that no stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction have been found in

Iraq, Blair rejected suggestions they never existed. "We know Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction, but we know we have not found them," the prime minister said.

"I genuinely believe that those stockpiles of weapons were there. I think that most people did, and that is why the whole of the international community came together and passed the United Nations resolution it did," Blair said.

Where those weapons are, he said, remains a mystery, at least until results of the Iraq Survey Group are released. Even that report, he said, might prove to be only an indication, not a final assessment.

"We do not know what has happened to them. They could

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## All along the watchtower



Cpl. Anthony-Louis Belgrave, British Army

**Pvt. Sekove Ratubalavu of Y Company, Princess of Wales Royal Regiment keeps a watchful eye while on duty at the CIMIC house in Al-Amarah. He is currently serving on a six-month deployment supporting Operation Telic IV. Attacks of various descriptions are common at Y Company's location.**

## PERSPECTIVES

# Voting is not just a right, it's a duty

**Commentary by Chief  
Master Sgt. Manny Sarmina**

On Sept. 18, 1787, the final day of the constitutional convention, Benjamin Franklin emerged from Independence Hall in Philadelphia into a crowd of curious spectators. The people were eagerly waiting for news of what form of government he and his fellow delegates had created for the young nation.

A woman stepped forward and asked Franklin, "Well, doctor, what have we got, a republic or a monarchy?"

Without hesitation, Franklin replied, "A republic, if you can keep it."

His prophetic reply is just as true today as it was more than 200 years ago.

"We the people" have a sacred obligation to safeguard "for ourselves and our posterity" the blessings of liberty our forefathers fought so hard to achieve. And the most fundamental obligation is the responsibility of every eligible citizen to vote.

This November, many Americans will take part in the democratic process by going to the polls to exercise their right to vote.

Sadly, many more will not. In fact, if this year's election turnout follows historical trends, more than half of the voting-age population will not bother to vote.

At stake this fall are the offices of the president and vice president of the United States, one-third of the seats in

the U.S. Senate, the entire House of Representatives, 13 state governorships and a host of other state and local offices, initiatives and issues.

Judging by voting statistics, "we the people" take our right to vote for granted. But the idea that the people should choose their leaders was once very radical in a world ruled by monarchies and oligarchies.

Enlightened philosophers like John Locke and Thomas Jefferson, however, argued that self-government is a natural right of every person and that governments derive their powers from the consent of the governed.

Our fundamental belief in the right of self-government, so eloquently expressed in the Declaration of Independence, and achieved by the blood of patriots in the American Revolution and on every battlefield since, is the cornerstone of our American political system. The U.S. Constitution provides the framework through which our political system works and guarantees each state a "republican form of government," a republic being a political system in which power resides in citizens who are entitled to vote for representatives

responsible to them.

Elections, therefore, are a crucial component of our representative democracy.

The right of all citizens to vote, however, did not come automatically, but evolved gradually — often painfully — over the course of two centuries.

For example, it is interesting that the person who asked Franklin what form of government the new nation would have was a woman, because the right to vote did not extend to her. In fact, during the colonial period and early years of our nation, voting was generally restricted to white men who owned property.

Other people such as women, blacks, American Indians and even members of certain religious groups could not vote.

The framers of the Constitution could not agree on who should be given the right to vote, so they deferred to the states. The Constitution, therefore, left to each state government the power to decide who could vote. Many of the early battles over the right to vote took place at the state level.

Overall, the struggle to achieve universal suffrage for all Americans was a long, often painful one, attained only by the heroic efforts of many Americans

who understood the importance of free elections in a representative democracy.

Today, the right to vote is so universally accepted as our most fundamentally basic of rights that we have forgotten the sacrifices it took to win that right. The struggle for universal suffrage reminds us that those things worth fighting for are also worth remembering, and, more importantly, exercising.

The right to vote is a symbol of our equality and the true source of our liberty. We should never forget what it took to win the right to vote and how important it is to the workings of a free and democratic society.

By voting, you are not only ensuring that your voice is heard, you are paying homage to those brave Americans who struggled to win that right for all Americans.

Let us renew our commitment and pride in our sacred liberties, our governmental institutions and our vibrant political system.

Apathy is never an excuse not to vote. Your vote counts, so make sure it is there to be counted.

*Chief Master Sgt. Manny Sarmina is assigned to the Air Force Surgeon General Office at Bolling Air Force Base in Washington, D.C., where his position is the chief of medical issues for enlisted personnel.*

**The right to vote is  
a symbol of our  
equality and the true  
source of our liberty.**

**It's your future.  
VOTE**  
For it!

Register and request your 2004  
General Election ballot now.  
Make your vote count!  
See your unit Voting Assistance  
Officer for more information.



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Gen. George Casey

**MNF-I PAO**  
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# Az Zubayr holds elections



Cpl. Anthony-Louis Belgrave, British Army

**A resident of Az-Zubayr in southern Iraq votes for the candidates of his choice July 9 in Iraq's first election since the sovereignty handover.**

**Submitted by Press Information Center Basrah**

**BASRAH, Iraq** — The people of the Az Zubayr township in southern Iraq participated in Iraq's first free elections July 9.

There were 130 candidates standing for 25 seats on the local council.

Thousands of people turned out at polling stations all around the town to cast their votes for two candidates of their choice.

"The elections are a big joy and a big celebration for the Iraqi people. It is also the start of the democracy we want in Iraq," said the leader of the Al Nabhan people in the Az Zubayr area who was present at the polling station at the Gaza Secondary School.

Voters were processed through a queuing system where they were checked for their eligibility to vote. Once they had satisfied the polling-station officials that they were allowed to vote, they made their choice of two candidates. Indelible ink was then marked onto each voter's hand and they placed their ballot slips into the ballot box.

The elections were scheduled for earlier in the year and the actual date for polling has been hampered by security worries. The township was scarred by two suicide bombers who struck in April. The Iraqi National Guard and the Iraqi Police Service formed a joint operations room in the police academy at Az Zubayr to oversee a security operation by both services.

## Renovated Ishaki Health Clinic opens

**Submitted by 1st Infantry Division Public Affairs**

**ISHAKI, Iraq** — The Ishaki Health Clinic reopened June 23 after a renovation spearheaded by multinational forces.

The clinic, located 20 kilometers west of Balad, is the main health-care center for the city and surrounding area with a population of more than 20,000 people.

The Ishaki City Council brought the health clinic to the attention of Task Force 1-77. After an initial proposal was made, the civil affairs team conducted an on-site evaluation of the facility and made recommendations to the council for repairs and renovation. The city council, through its rebuilding committee, sought out and selected contractors and made an official request to the task force for assistance

with the clinic.

The clinic renovation was approved at a cost of \$32,000, and work began April 26. The project completely renovated the existing building, providing new examination rooms; a reception area; new air conditioners in all rooms; a sterilization station for medical instruments; renovation of the bathrooms; and repaired an existing security wall and gate. The project was completed June 20.

Ishaki city government and health officials along with Capt. Mathew Archambault, the commander of Charlie Company, 1-26 Infantry, hosted the grand opening. The 272nd Engineer Group from Logistics Support Area Anaconda attended to provide donated medical supplies to the clinic and the civil affairs team donated medical books with the help of 415th Civil Affairs Battalion Public Health Team.

# Mosul Airfield begins transition from military to civilian use

**Story and photo by Spc. Blair Larson 139th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment**

**MOSUL, Iraq** — Renovations are underway to turn Mosul Airfield into a commercial airport, bringing international commerce and trade to northern Iraq. A ceremony was held July 3 to celebrate the first phase of the airfield construction and the beginning of the transition.

The planned renovations will bring Mosul Airport to international standards, officials said, allowing flights from commercial airlines to fly into and out of the airport. The airport will bring business and trade from around the world to northern Iraq, providing economic opportunities. It will also provide access to northern Iraq for tourists who are interested in experiencing Iraq's historical sites.

"Mosul is the hub of northern Iraq," said Gen. Mohammed Ahmed Abdul-Karim, the director of the project. "Now people from across northern Iraq can fly out of Mosul instead of making a long drive to Baghdad."

The project includes remodeling the existing airport terminal and demolishing military-style bunkers left from Saddam Hussein's regime. In addition to this first phase of remodeling, Iraqi and multinational officials plan to renovate the airport taxiway, to build a second terminal and a tower and to update the electrical system, the weather-forecasting equipment and the runway lights.

The Iraqi leaders expect to be able to host international flights within two years. The city council and governor approved a plan to purchase planes at the end of the year to begin flights to the countries that surround Iraq.



Workers demolish a military bunker at the Mosul Airfield July 3. The work is part of a project to return the Mosul Airfield to the Iraqi people for use as an international airport.

## Medical school plans for Harvard partnership

**Submitted by 1st Infantry Division Public Affairs**

**TIKRIT, Iraq** — Officials from Task Force Danger and the Tikrit University Medical School met July 7 to formalize plans for a new partnership with Harvard Medical School.

The Tikrit University College of Medicine will submit a 200-page report about the school's structure and organization to Harvard, which will then analyze the report and prepare a five-year plan, said Capt. Thamus J. Morgan, who is a veterinarian with the 415th Civil Affairs Battalion and a faculty member at Harvard.

Wherever the battalion's civil affairs teams go, the Iraqi people tell them they want more knowledge, Morgan said. The Harvard plan will provide for a free exchange of that much-needed knowledge.

Morgan added that Harvard has similar programs in place at 19 universities worldwide, and the plan is expected to be similar to those programs.

Iraqi faculty and staff could be studying in the U.S. in September as part of a faculty-staff exchange

program, Morgan said. The plan should have Harvard faculty and staff in Iraq as soon as the State Department lifts the ban on U.S. citizen travel to this country, she added.

The two schools already share a common theme in their teaching methods. The Tikrit medical school adopted problem-based learning years ago, and that method of learning is a hallmark of Harvard, Morgan said.

Students are placed in learning situations from the day they enter the schools, said Morgan. They are not expected to simply study and regurgitate facts; they are expected to dig into a problem and find the solution by using all the resources available to them at the schools.

The resources at Tikrit University Medical School should improve with the program, Morgan said. All of the universities Harvard has worked with have benefited from the partnerships, she added.

"It's a win-win situation for the people of Iraq," Morgan said. She added that she hopes that "some day, you will be able to visit Iraq as a tourist and know there is a world-class health facility available here."



# 264th Engineers provide necessities

## National Guard unit improves school, clinic

Story and photo by  
Spc. Sherree Casper  
196th Mobile Public  
Affairs Detachment

**KHUZAMYAH, Iraq** — When children in this town return to school in the fall, they'll be learning in newly refurbished surroundings, courtesy of the 264th Engineer Group.

Soldiers from the Wisconsin Army National Guard unit repaired the Mohlhl Primary School here and were making improvements to a nearby medical clinic in June. The unit also had a hand in refurbishing a grade school in Al Alem.

Prior to the renovations, children had to travel home just to use the bathroom because there was no running water at the school in Khuzamyah, said Maj. Patrick D. Beyer, the projects officer.

With the bare necessities lacking there, Beyer said this caused a major disruption for students and teachers. The Berlin, Wisc., resident pointed out that education is critical in the rebuilding of Iraq.

"It's important to me to bring back central services," he said, referring to the need for everything from electric and water to education.

The refurbishing of the two schools and medical clinic cost \$50,000 each. The projects were funded by the Commander Emergency Relief Fund. Each schools consist of six classrooms and two offices. The medical clinic, staffed by a doctor and two nurses, is comprised of a treatment room and doctor's office.

While the Mohlhl School will welcome some 500 students in the fall, the Al Biset School in Al Alem will house about 150 students in its classrooms. Beyer said the small clinic serves 12,000 people in the area.

After the official ribbon-cutting ceremonies at each school, Soldiers delivered about 500 pounds of donated school supplies from Operation Pencil Box.

Sgt. Jake L. Tilseth said he enjoyed helping deliver the mounds of boxes filled with everything from notebooks to folders.

As a member of the South Dakota Army National Guard, the 26-year-old built schools in Nicaragua three years ago. Looking at the happy faces of the children in Khuzamyah as they scampered around their newly renovated school, the Menomonie, Wisc., resident

said he felt a certain satisfaction.

"When you get to see the kids, it makes you feel as though you are doing something worthwhile," Tilseth said.

As small hands tied to grab at the boxes she was carrying inside the school, Spc. Robbin J.M. Goettl said she couldn't help but think of her 4-year-old daughter, Paige, back home in New Auburn, Wisc.

"It feels great," the 24-year-old said. "I wish I could do more for them."

A cook with the 264th Engineer Group, Goettl described the experience as "awesome."

Beyer said he wouldn't mind if more Soldiers shared in that sentiment. In fact, they may get that opportunity.

"I have a boatload of future projects," Beyer said.

Funding is currently being sought for four water treatment plants that will each serve 300 to 500 people in small villages along the Tigris River. Money is also being sought for a water-

distribution project that will serve five villages and 30,000 people in the Makhou Valley between Bajji and Sharquat.

Pricetag? About \$1.2 million.

Beyer said the 264th Engineer Group is helping to rebuild Iraq one project at a time.



**Spc. Robbin J.M. Goettl, a cook with the 264th Engineer Group, brings school supplies to help celebrate a school re-opening.**

## Bayji opens newspaper

Submitted by  
1st Infantry Division  
Public Affairs

**BAYJI, Iraq** — Local Iraqi residents and Task Force Danger Soldiers recently celebrated the first edition of *The Arabic Future*, a newspaper printed for the citizens here.

The newspaper, which published its first edition July 1, was made a reality by cooperation between the Bayji City Council, Task Force 1-7 Field Artillery and a civil affairs team. The initial cost of the project was \$9,500, and continued production of the newspaper will rely on profits gained from the sales of

newspapers and advertising.

In his first editorial column, Sa'ad Thamir expressed his happiness for being able to finally bring a newspaper to his city. He promised "to be neutral in all the information and articles and will never be afraid to tell the truth."

The Bayji newspaper is printed in Mosul, since there is no local printing press, and has a circulation of approximately 3,000 copies per issue. Thamir and his staff of 10 local men, worked to accomplish their goal of publishing the first edition in time to commemorate "the day of the the government transference to the Iraqi people," the editor said.

## Army seeks to recruit 'downsized' Airmen, Sailors

By Donna Miles  
American Forces Press Service

**WASHINGTON** — After they "cross into the blue" or "accelerate their lives," the Army hopes service members leaving the Air Force and Navy will join the "Army of One."

A new program, Operation Blue to Green, seeks to recruit Airmen and Sailors leaving their service due to force reductions into the Army, which is temporarily increasing its ranks.

Plans call for the Air Force to reduce its numbers by 16,000 and the Navy by 7,900 by the end of 2005, officials from the two services confirmed.

An Army spokesperson called Operation Blue to Green a win-win opportunity that "will definitely benefit the Department of Defense as well as these individuals."

Details of the program are still being worked out, but an Army Website says the program tells potential recruits it "will allow you to continue to serve your country, to maintain the benefits of military service and to expand your horizons by gaining new training and trying new things."

Candidates for the program are Airmen and Sailors in grades E-5 and below who qualify for an honorable discharge from active duty. Participation in the Operation Blue to Green program, the Website says, "is dependent upon your

service's willingness to release you from your current active-duty obligation."

Marines and Coast Guardsmen interested in the program must first complete their current active-duty service obligations before enlisting in the Army, the site advises.

New soldiers recruited under Operation Blue to Green will go through a four week "warrior-transition course" being developed by the Army Training and Doctrine Command.

"This will further orient them in terms of what it means to be a soldier in the Army," the Army spokesperson said.

This new course in basic combat skills will substitute for the nine-week course currently used to train Airmen, Sailors and Coast Guardsmen enlisting in the Army, the Web site noted.

Bonuses will be offered to recruits for selected military occupational specialties, although details were not yet available.

While the Army finalizes details about the program, it's wasting no time getting the word out to potential candidates. An online information form encourages interested candidates to sign up for more information.

However, the site notes, "until formal policies have been approved, Army recruiters cannot accept applications, process paperwork or reserve training seats."

### Shhhh!

Operational Security...



OPSEC

Keep cell phone and  
email commo free of  
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You don't know who's listening.



# Iraqi Army makes first patrol into Baghdad streets

Story and photo by  
Sgt. Jared Zabaldo  
Office of Security  
Transition Public Affairs

**BAGHDAD, Iraq** — The Iraqi Army made a well-received first foray into the city here July 1 with a single company from the Iraqi Intervention Force's 2nd Battalion conducting foot patrols down the crowded streets of the troubled southern district of Abu Deshir.

The operation, originally designed as a combined Iraqi Army goodwill and security mission, eventually erupted into a jubilant and peaceful celebration for the local residents as crowds lined the streets.

The patrol marked the beginnings of the Iraqi Army's combined multinational force, Iraqi Police Service and Iraqi Army security efforts in the city.

"I was very happy to see the Iraqi people again and see the situation," said the IIF's 2nd Battalion, 2nd Company commander, Maj. Abbas Jassim Jebir, one of the leaders of the patrol.

"The people know about the new army and the uniforms, supplies, the treatment of the soldiers, and they see us in high-tech equipment, and they believe the Iraqi Army can provide security," Jebir said.

"Most of the men asked us, 'How can we join this new army,'" he added.

The operation marks the



**Soldiers from the Iraqi Intervention Force make their first patrol in Baghdad, Iraq, July 1. The patrol by the unit marked the start of the army's security efforts in the city.**

beginning of the 2nd Battalion's operations in the city after moving lead elements of the force into the area earlier in the week.

The unit, after spending several months in service north of Baghdad at the Taji Military Training Base, completed two months of special counterinsurgency training at the base. The balance of the force will join the lead group in the coming weeks and will contribute to the ongoing security mission in the city.

"The intent is to get Iraqis out to provide their own security and to get leaders out to meet local leaders," said the advisor support team senior advisor, Marine Corps Maj. David E. Lane II — one of only a handful of American servicemen accompanying the patrolling force in

an advisory role on the mission. Lane is a member of the Coalition Military Assistance Training Team.

"They were really motivated to see the reaction," Lane said, "and with everybody talking to them, I'd say the Iraqis were pretty happy to see the Iraqi Army out today."

In the coming months, multinational forces will continue to work with the unit and the rest of the Iraqi Security Forces as part of the ongoing effort to provide a trained and effective security element in Iraq.

A small advisor support team of 10 Marines who have worked with the force since early March will continue to provide advisory assistance as needed. The IIF

See **ING**, Page 10

## Iraq in Brief

### 2,000 employed in largest employment project to date

**BAGHDAD, Iraq** — The 1st Cavalry Division broke ground on the Al Boetha landfill here July 10.

The \$35-million project will be the largest employment effort in the 5th Brigade Combat Team's area of operation, providing jobs for 2,000 Iraqi workers.

Workers, who earn \$7 a day, will clear a 3.6 kilometer area for the landfill and build fences and a road during the two-month project. They will also dig a canal for water runoff around the landfill.

To facilitate even distribution of the jobs, neighborhood councils from six districts provided names to Army civil affairs officials.

In addition to the expected 2,000 employees, 700 additional Iraqis came to the site looking for jobs, said Staff Sgt. Rodney Cox, a civil affairs team member in Company A, 489th Civil Affairs Battalion.

### Iraqi National Guard receives 10,000 sets of armor

**BAGHDAD, Iraq** — The Iraqi Ministry of Defense received 10,000 sets of donated body armor July 9 as part of the multinational force's ongoing effort to assist the Iraqi government equip its security forces.

The armor, donated by the United Arab Emirates and slotted for delivery to Iraqi National Guard troops in the coming days, will be followed by another 20,000 purchased sets by the end of the month. Ultimately, the Iraqi National Guard is slated to receive nearly 42,000 sets of armor.

"The United Arab Emirates is trying to do their part to facilitate the security effort in Iraq," said the Iraqi National Guard logistics chief, U.S. Army Maj. John Isgrigg. Isgrigg is with the Coalition Military Assistance Training Team.

The Iraqi National Guard — a security and emergency agency in Iraq composed of Iraqi volunteers — is currently made up of 45 battalions and 37,371 soldiers, including 2,200 in training.

The force conducts operations with multinational forces to counter security threats within the country

### Marines shepherd improvement projects

**AR RAMADI, Iraq** — Marines here are involved in several civil-military operations in the region, including making payments in excess of \$80,000 to stabilize the area.

Marines recently attended the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Khandari City Council Building, which was constructed with multinational force funding using Iraqi contractors and laborers. The new facility — complete with new furniture — provides the council with a place to meet in and handle city matters.

A civil affairs team assessed the Iskandariyah Hospital and met with the staff to review assistance initiatives and discuss plans for future aid. Another civil affairs team met with Iraqi National Guard's 502nd Battalion to pay \$31,300 for water and electricity connections for Iraqi soldiers.

Additional payments of \$52,124 were made for other civil-military projects that included construction at a school, renovations to a mosque and repairs to a fire station.

### 1st ID Soldiers, Iraqi Security Forces team for patrols

**TIKRIT, Iraq** — Almost 125 of the approximately 375 patrols conducted by the 1st Infantry Division and Task Force Danger July 9-10 were conducted with the Iraqi Security Forces.

During the patrols and two raids, troops captured nine people and confiscated weapons and equipment that included one AK-47 assault rifle, one 152mm round, five 105mm artillery rounds, five 57mm anti-aircraft HE rounds, one mortar round, two rocket propelled grenades and four improvised explosive devices.

Four people, including a high-value individual who was suspected of making threats against the Iraqi National Guard, were captured by Task Force Danger Soldiers from the 81st Enhanced Separate Brigade (Task Force Tacoma) during a raid near Ad Dujayl July 9.

The individuals were transported to a multinational detention facility for questioning. Soldiers confiscated one AK-47 assault rifle in the raid.

## 30th Iraqi National Guard Brigade receives new pickups, jeeps

By Spc. Sherree Casper  
196th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

**TIKRIT, Iraq** — The 30th Iraqi National Guard Brigade received more than 60 brand-new vehicles from multinational forces July 7.

The handover occurred at Forward Operating Base Specker.

Soldiers from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team handed over 31 2004-model diesel four-wheel pickup trucks and 35 Czechoslovakian-made jeeps.

The cost for each pickup was \$23,000 and \$14,000 per jeep. Funding for the pickup trucks was supplied by the 1st Infantry Division with the Multi-National Corps-Iraq covering the costs for the jeeps.

About 150 of the 2,500 members of the 30th

Iraqi National Guard Brigade were on hand to pick up the vehicles.

"This will help to more fully equip the Iraqi Security Forces to do the job that they need to do here in Iraq," said Maj. Eric C. Frutche, the officer in charge of the Iraqi Security Force for the 2nd Brigade Combat Team.

Based in Tikrit, the 30th ING Brigade umbrellas three ING battalions that provide security for the region.

Two pickup trucks can carry an 11-man ING squad with the option of mounting a machine gun in the bed of the vehicle.

Frutche said by having four-wheel drive pickups for the rough desert terrain, the ING has higher mobility.

"They are efficient and reliable," he said of the pickups.



# Soldiers delve into instructor skills

*1st ID engineers host Explosive Hazards Awareness Instructor Course so Soldiers can teach their own*

**Story and photo by  
Spc. Sherree Casper**  
196th Mobile Public  
Affairs Detachment

**TIKRIT, Iraq** — As Sgt. Scott M. Van Order held tightly onto his legs, Spc. Andrew J. Gilmon teetered precariously from the back of a humvee.

With one hand, Gilmon gingerly used a wooden probe to search for explosives through the coarse dirt. He periodically laid a poker chip in the area he was probing — a critical step to outlining an escape route.

The combat engineers were two of 35 Soldiers who took part in the Explosive Hazards Awareness Instructor Course at Forward Operating Base Danger here. Hosted by the 1st Infantry Division's Engineer Brigade, the three-day course was designed as a train-the-trainer program for soldiers stationed at various FOBs within Task Force Danger.

It's intended to reduce the number of casualties as a result of explosive hazards, particularly improvised explosive devices, unexploded ordnance and mines in the combat zone, officials said.

Members of the multination-

al force instructed on everything from mine probing and extraction drills to improvised explosive device and unexploded ordnance recognition.

"Soldiers tend to pick up stuff and don't know what the hell they are doing," said Sgt. 1st Class Rey P. Valiente of the 1st Infantry Division's Engineer Brigade.

The 40-year-old Los Angeles, Calif., resident said soldiers who participated in the program will be able to teach a five-hour block of instruction on explosive-hazards awareness to troops in their units.

Identifying the hazards of unexploded ordnance, Valiente said, is a priority of the course.

What makes the program unique is the fact that it's taught by multinational instructors, he said.

"If you are going to learn about IEDs, get different views on the subject," he said.

Maj. Craig Madden, of the Royal Australian Engineers, is the program's officer in charge. His advice to soldiers is "don't touch."

"We show them the key indicators — what to look out for — and teach them ... so that these students become more aware of

their surroundings from an explosive-hazards situation," said Madden of Perth, Australia.

He was chosen for the position because of his extensive background dealing with IEDs, he said.

The course culminated with practical exercises testing Soldiers' knowledge of how to extract themselves from a minefield. The exercises included mine-probing drills. They also had to identify UXOs and IEDs in separate lane stations.

Having multinational instructors help in the training was critical because explosive hazards potentially affect everyone in the combat zone regardless of background, officials said.

"This is a [multinational] theatre, and so all forces — not just the U.S. forces — require this training," Madden said. "It has become a [multinational] team to train all forces in the explosive-hazards awareness."

Staff Sgt. Chris N. Stowe of the United States Marine Corps' 2nd Explosive Ordnance Disposal out of Camp LeJeune, N.C., is the program's noncommissioned officer in charge.



**Sgt. Scott M. Van Order holds onto Spc. Andrew J. Gilmon's legs as the combat engineers practice a mount-and-vehicle extraction.**

"The point of this training is to save lives," said the Warren, Ohio, resident.

Describing himself as "middle-level management" for EOD in the Marine Corps, Stowe is based at the Mine and Explosive Ordnance Information Coordination Center at Camp Victory. The MEOICC counts Americans, Australians, South Koreans and Ukrainians among its trainers.

Stowe said explosive-hazards-awareness training is more crucial than ever.

"The enemy is constantly learning what we do to combat their techniques, and they are changing them," he said.

He noted that the situation is very fluid.

"It's like carrying a handful of water down the street. You can't stay up-to-date fast enough," Stowe said. "Things change with the change of the wind. The only way we can combat that is by changing our tactics, techniques and procedures — TTPs — and getting that out to the units."

On the road more than three weeks out of each month, Madden and Stowe teach several three-day courses throughout Iraq with the help of MEOICC trainers.

Since the program began nearly a year ago, the duo has trained some soldiers from Great Britain, Japan, Poland, Spain and Ukraine.

The explosive-hazards-awareness training has been tasked as one of the highest priorities in theater, Stowe said.

"This course really does save Soldiers' lives," said Staff Sgt. Joshua J. Marcum, a combat engineer with Charlie Company, 82nd Engineer Battalion, stationed at FOB Gabe east of Baqubah, Iraq.

Marcum said he got lucky and was able to fly to FOB Danger for the three-day class rather than convoy up north. The Morristown, Tenn., resident said he sees at least one explosive a day in "RPG Alley," the route that goes from eastern Baghdad to Route 5.

Sgt. Daniel Carter is a scout with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 63rd Armor based at FOB Scunior, located south-east of Balad, Iraq.

"In this class, we learned more things that are relevant to our situation," said Carter. "Every (Soldier) needs to know this stuff."



**Sgt. 1st Class Richard W. DeMarco, an infantryman with the 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry, practices probing for mines at Forward Operating Base Danger in Tikrit, Iraq.**



# Marines, Soldiers battle blaze

Story and photos by

Sgt. Jose L. Garcia

1st Marine Division Public Affairs

**CAMP AL ASAD, Iraq** — A fire ripped through tents here July 7, burning the belongings of more than 140 Marines just days before they were slated to return to the United States.

There were no injuries or fatalities. The cause of the fire is under investigation.

The blaze was brought under control by Marine and Army firefighters from Marine Wing Support Squadron 273 and the Army's 767th Engineer Team.

"We saw smoke in the distance, so we came just to see what it was and turns out we made a good call," said Cpl. Joseph J. Giasson, 21, from Harlan, Iowa, and the P-19A crew chief with MWSS-273.

By the time firefighters arrived, two tents used by Marines as a berthing area burned and more were in danger. The smoke was approximately a thousand-feet wide and the flames licked the sky at 75 feet, firefighters said.

"We had to hurry and get the water lines out to fight the fire close to the other tents," Giasson said.

"Tent fires are dangerous because they burn fast," said Army Sgt. Obie A. Myers, 27, from Dallas Center, Iowa, and a firefighter with 767 Engineer Team. "You have to have respect for it, and the first thing to do is find the base of it."

Adding to the danger was ammunition left inside the tents. Rounds cooked off in the searing heat, raising the stakes of gaining control of the fire.

"We had to protect the burning assets and cool off the ammo first," Myers

said. "Everyone on duty came as fast as possible and time was a huge factor. Responding quickly helped us control the fire."

"There was a little confusion at first, but once we got together on the strategy, we took care of it and did a good job," Giasson said.

Firefighters fought the summer desert heat even as they battled the flames. Some paused for water to cool off and hydrate.

"I considered



**Marine and Army firefighters fought a fire for more than an hour in the heat and through the smoke at Camp Al Asad July 7. The flames were as close as 10 feet from reaching other tents. A total of 141 Marines from 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment lost everything in their living areas.**

myself in great shape, but the heat made it difficult," said Lance Cpl. Matthew D. Richerd, 23, from Covington, La., a firefighter with MWSS-273. "This was definitely the hardest fire I have ever dealt with in these circumstances."

Marines from 1st Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment scurried alongside the firefighters to gather their gear as the flames crept closer. The battalion recently arrived in Iraq and the blaze threatened to consume their gear, as well. The flames were as close as 10 feet from reaching their tent.

"I grabbed as much as I could and left. I just ran and got out of the way," said Pfc. Donald A. Bills, 22, from Orlando, Fla., and a machine gunner with the battalion. "I feel bad for the other Marines whose stuff got lost."

Not everyone was fortunate to recover their gear. A total of 141 Marines from 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment lost everything they had in their living areas.

"I'm glad all the Marines made it out safely and no one was injured despite of all the loss," said Cpl. Cedric C. Jordan, from Abbeville, La., an embark logistics specialist with 3rd battalion, 4th Marine Regiment. "That's all that matters right now."

"I just feel relieved," added the 21-year-old. "It could have been a chaotic situation if someone would have been injured. Materials can be replaced, but Marines can't. Our brother companies came together and put in extra gear they had — including cammies — to share with everyone who lost everything in the fire, the way it's supposed to be."



**Lance Cpl. Matthew D. Richerd, a firefighter with Marine Wing Support Squadron 273, douses hot coals from a fire in Camp Al Asad, Iraq, July 7. Fires destroyed 10 tents before Soldiers and Marines got the flames under control.**

## Wyoming native believes in providing freedom to Iraqis

Story and photo by Sgt. Fred Minnick

139th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

**MOSUL, Iraq** — As an infantry team leader stationed here, Spc. Eric Smith from Casper, Wyo., said he believes in his mission of providing security for the Iraqi people and rebuilding the country's security forces.

"The people here endured years of hardship under Saddam Hussein," said Smith, a member of Company C, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division (Stryker Brigade Combat Team) based out of Fort Lewis, Wash. "The people have told me that Saddam kicked them out of their homes and killed their relatives. I'm proud to have helped bring them freedom and rebuild their country."

Smith leads Soldiers on patrols, raids and other combat missions.

Even before sovereignty was transferred to the Iraqi

people June 28, Smith and his fellow Soldiers had been conducting security operations with the Iraqi National Guard and Iraqi police.

He said he has a good rapport with the Iraqi soldiers and police officers, and that he admires the passion they have for their jobs.

"They are hard-working family men, just like us, and they want to make a difference in their society," Smith said. "Several of them get death threats from terrorists, but they keep doing their job because they care about Iraq."

According to Smith's leaders, he's a selfless Soldier who will one day be a noncommissioned officer. He passed the Army's promotion board for the rank of sergeant in May.

"Smith is a hard-working, committed Soldier," said 1st Lt. Nick Kardonsky, the executive officer for Company C. "From the moment he joined our unit, we knew he would be promoted ahead of his peers."



**Spc. Eric Smith patrols the streets of Mosul with Iraqi National Guard soldiers. Smith is a member of Company C, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division.**



# Renovations complete

## Two universities improved by 1st Cavalry Division

Story and photo by  
Spc. Bryan Kinkade  
1st Cavalry Division  
Public Affairs

**BAGHDAD, Iraq** — Iraqi contractors completed renovations on Baghdad University and al-Nahrain University in late June with the help of the 1st Cavalry Division's 1st Battalion, 9th Cavalry Regiment.

The \$600,000 projects were completed by Iraqi contractors hired by the battalion's Company A, attached to 3rd Brigade's Arkansas National Guard unit, 1st Battalion, 153rd Infantry Regiment.

"It feels good," 2nd Lt. Robert Kotecki, the company's civil

affairs and information operations officer, said. "It's a sense of accomplishment."

The Baghdad University renovations focused on the front entrance of the campus. They included a parking lot for 80 buses, plumbing and gardening improvements and new walkways and lighting.

Before the lot was constructed, buses would park on the side of the road, the head engineer for the Karada District said. Traffic jams would occur frequently, so the university's president made a plan to fix the problem.

The fountains at the campus entrance were also repaired after not working for 14 years.

Baghdad University is considered the most prestigious university in Iraq, with more than 70,000 students attending the satellite campuses.

The al-Nahrain University, received a new political science

building, complete with air conditioning, fluorescent lighting, bathrooms and an amphitheater.

"The building was started before the war, but it was pretty much a skeleton structure," Kotecki said. "The floor was littered with anti-aircraft rounds when we first got here."

The al-Nahrain University, formerly the Saddam University, was an elite school for Ba'ath Party children, Kotecki said.

At each university, Lt. Col. Kendall Penn, the 1-153 INF commander, cut the ribbon for the ceremonies. After the al-Nahrain University ribbon cutting, the Soldiers were treated to a feast of Arabic food and sodas.

Company A, 1-9 Cav. has several projects on the horizon, including an allergy and vaccination clinic, the al-Zeweia Health Clinic and building a gas station near Baghdad University, which will be the only one in the area.



The refurbished entrance to Baghdad University flies an Iraqi flag while the fountains, which had not worked for 14 years, spray magenta-colored water 25 feet into the air.

## ADF chief visits troops in Iraq

By Australian Department  
of Defence Public Affairs

**BAGHDAD, Iraq** — The chief of Australia's Defence Force, Gen. Peter Cosgrove, returned July 12 from a three-day visit to Australian personnel deployed here for Operation Catalyst, Australia's military contribution to the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Iraq.

Cosgrove was the first armed forces chief from any of the 31 multinational force countries to visit Iraq since the transfer of authority and to meet the new commander of the Multi-National Force-Iraq, Gen. George Casey.

The visit gave Cosgrove an opportunity to reinforce Australia's military relationship with its MNF-I allies and to gain

first-hand knowledge of MNF-I's progress in providing a secure environment for Iraq to prosper.

"Amongst the violence, there are so many good things happening in Iraq. There is real progress being made in the quality of life for the great majority of Iraqis," Cosgrove said.

He saw firsthand Australia's contribution to the restoration and rehabilitation of Iraq and discussed the operation with the commander of Australian forces, Brig. Peter Hutchinson, and met with Australian service members serving in the Middle East.

"I am continually delighted by the sense of purpose and cheerfulness of every Aussie I meet in Iraq," said Cosgrove. "There's no disguising the danger and hardship they face, and I am very

proud of our country men and women who are giving 110 percent to help rehabilitate Iraq."

Cosgrove also met a new generation of Australian soldiers from the Baghdad-based security detachment who are serving in Iraq with the same company he commanded nearly 30 years ago as an infantry major. The visit was Cosgrove's third to the Middle East since Operation Catalyst began in July 2003.

Following the transition of authority to the interim Iraqi government, the Australian Defence Force continues to contribute to multinational force efforts to develop a secure and stable environment in Iraq and assist national recovery programs. About 850 ADF personnel are serving in Operation Catalyst.

## ING *Continued from Page Seven*

unit, though, is tasked by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense and, after months of training, formulates its own mission plans for scheduled operations with employments continuing to be coordinated with other multinational forces.

The citizens on hand for the first patrol reacted immediately to the force on the ground by honking horns, flashing lights, clapping and loud words of encouragement. Families on balconies, rooftops and in apartment windows waved and called to the excited troops as they passed by.

Soldiers interacted with throngs of children following alongside as the leaders conducted their goodwill information and interaction missions with the local citizens and business people working in the area.

"People told us their problems and requested help with these concerns and asked us about the facts of our mission," Jebir said. "We told them that there are more on the way just like us. And we told them that we are fighting for the principles of security, stability and the reconstruction efforts."

For the Coalition Military Assistance Training Team, a branch of the Office of Security Transition specifical-

ly tasked with training, equipping and mentoring the Iraqi armed forces, the event is part of the ongoing effort to assist the Iraqi government in the training of another 24 Iraqi Army battalions in the coming months to bring the full complement up to the originally programmed force of 27 battalions divided among nine brigades and three divisions.

The effort should be complete by early February 2005.

"It was like when my dad bought me my first bicycle and the expression he had when he took off the training wheels and I finally rode down the street on my own," said Advisor Support Team member Marine Corps Staff Sgt. John McKnight. "I was hoping they would look at these guys as the new face of Iraq, and they did."

The mission was designed, in addition to the security element, to assure local citizens that the army was now here and more would arrive in the coming weeks to provide security in the city. Operations will cover the gamut of typical line unit missions including patrols, traffic-control points, cordons and searches, and intelligence missions.

"I feel great about this," Jebir said. "This dream is coming true, day by day."

## STAND *Continued from Page Three*

have been removed. They could have been hidden. They could have been destroyed," Blair said. "I have to accept that we have not found them — that we may not find them."

Despite the failure to uncover them, Blair said such weapons posed a danger in hands of Saddam, who "was a threat, not only to his region, but to the entire world. The world is a safer place without him."

The prime minister told the House of Commons that Britain has "played a constructive part" in bringing change to Iraq. He said he admires the way Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi and his interim government have

approached their first days in office since the June 28 transfer of sovereignty.

Blair said Britain continues to maintain close ties with its European allies, including France and Germany, that did not support Operation Iraqi Freedom. But, he insisted, he is "not going to have the relationship with the United States of America subordinated to the interests of any other country."

Blair said it's in Britain's best interest to maintain a strong relationship with the United States.

"Most countries around the world would give their eye-teeth to have that relationship," he said.



# Soldiers graduate, head to Iraq

## *Troops' first assignment is patrolling the streets of Iraq*

Story and photo by  
Sgt. Fred Minnick  
139th Mobile Public  
Affairs Detachment

**MOSUL, Iraq** — After completing basic and advanced individual training, Pvt. Robert Sisk and Pvt. Ian Battan only stayed at their first duty station, Fort Lewis, Wash., for a brief stint before deploying to a combat zone thousands of miles away from their homes.

Sisk, from Lancaster, Calif., and Battan, from Vancouver, Wash., are both here assigned to Company C, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division (Stryker Brigade Combat Team).

The Stryker Brigade entered Iraq in December while both Soldiers were still in basic training. Sisk crossed the Iraqi border in February and Battan entered Iraq in June. The two Soldiers said they felt trained and ready but didn't know what to expect when they crossed the border.

"I'll admit, I was nervous," said Battan, 19, an assistant gunner. "On my first day of actual duty with my unit, I went on a



**Pvt. Ian Battan of Vancouver, Wash., secures his sector of fire from his Stryker vehicle's air-sentry hatch. When Company C, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment – Battan's unit – entered Iraq, he was still in basic training. Battan was assigned to Company C in Mosul, Iraq, in June.**

combat mission where we raided a suspected terrorist's house."

Sisk, 20, said Iraq was a culture shock, but that his fellow platoon members helped him quickly adapt to his new surroundings.

"Ever since I joined this unit, I've been welcomed, and they have taught me how to be a better Soldier," Sisk said. "In a way, I'm really lucky because many Soldiers train for years for combat, and I'm getting the real-

world experience on my first assignment."

Since their first days, Battan and Sisk have patrolled the streets of Mosul in 100-degree plus weather, conducted raids and operated traffic control-

points. They also work with Iraqi National Guard soldiers.

"We are preparing the Iraqi National Guard to take over when we leave, and even though I've only been here for a couple of weeks, I'd say the Iraqi National Guard soldiers are doing a good job," Battan said. "Working with soldiers from another country is certainly new to me, but then again, I'm exposed to something new every day."

Sgt. 1st Class Brad Kelley, Battan's platoon sergeant, said they integrated Battan into the platoon as soon as possible.

"We have a tight-knit platoon, and we wanted Battan to feel like a part of the team, because it's difficult being away from home for the first time," Kelley said.

For Sisk, his biggest challenge is being away from his grandparents, Christine and Harry Ralph, he said, but he overcomes homesickness by putting things into perspective.

"I really feel like I'm a part of history," Sisk said. "I hope I can look back 20 years from now and say I helped make Iraq what it is today."

## Automatic reaction

### *Gunners watch over convoys*

By Pfc. Abel Trevino  
28th Public Affairs Detachment

**BALAD, Iraq** — Squeezing the trigger is a last resort for those Soldiers assigned to protect and defend the combat logistic patrols, but when they do, it's with conviction.

"A lot of people have this misconception that gunners are trigger-happy people. I will be the first to tell you that we don't want to pull that trigger," said Spc. Chris Antoniou, a gunner for third platoon, 660th Transportation Company.

Since arriving in February, Antoniou has been the gunner on roughly 30 trips throughout Iraq. His missions have included escorting fuel, civilian truckers, foreign national students and military instructors. All the while, his eyes were peeled for signs of danger.

"Usually, what I look for as a gunner is anything out of the ordinary — [improvised explosive devices], daisy chains. I look real close," he said.

Attackers sometimes tip off the gunners about oncoming dangers, said Spc.

Nicholas Guinn of the 1544th Transportation Company which is stationed at Logistical Base Seitz.

Guinn said they mark IEDs with shoelaces, shoes on wires, shiny objects on the side of the road, CDs and mirrors.

"The days we got ambushed, they tried partially blocking the road with guard rails, rocks and stones," he said. "There wasn't any traffic on the road, either. So we tensed up a little bit, scanned our sectors and waited for the first shots."

When the shooting starts, the gunner has instincts honed by training to rely on.

"When the situation comes and you're there and you have a split second to think, it goes back to what you've been taught in the Army. You just go with your instincts. It's like a split second reaction. It just happens and you have just your instincts to go by," said Spc. Daniel T. Murphy, a gunner for the 1544th Trans. Co. "You just function."

"Hitting people and seeing people fall kind of gets to you when you're done.



Spc. James Truitt, U.S. Army

**A gunner on a combat logistics patrol looks down the barrel of his M-249 Squad Automatic Weapon as he prepares to provide security for another resupply mission.**

Not while it's happening, because you're trying to save your life and the lives of everyone in the convoy. It's crazy," Guinn said.

The gunners have assisted in preventing firefights.

"It's an intimidation factor anyway

you look at it. They know when they see us coming [in the gun trucks] to get out of the way," Antoniou said. "We're not out to pull the trigger. We will give them every opportunity to get out of the way before we resort to extreme action."

Sometimes, intimidation is enough.







# Survey says . . .

## Most Iraqis pleased with sovereignty

Story and photo by  
**Cpl. Bill Putnam**  
122nd Mobile Public  
Affairs Detachment

**BAGHDAD, Iraq** — A Soldier from the Iraqi National Guard's 304th Battalion walks up to a gate in the Saddiyah neighborhood here, bangs on it and waits.

Eventually a man answers and the Soldier asks him questions ranging from what the man thinks of the new Iraqi interim government to his electricity needs.

Up and down the street other ING soldiers do the same while U.S. Soldiers from the 1st Cavalry Division's Battery A, 1st Battalion, 21st Field Artillery Regiment provide security. This type of mission is what 1st Lt. Ryan Swindell, a platoon leader in Alpha Battery, calls a "target IO", or information operations, patrol.

Every few days, the Soldiers of his battery conduct these surveys in the Saddiyah neighborhood of Al Rashid district here.

As the July 1 patrol organized itself after arriving at the designated street, Swindell explained that the goal of the questionnaire was for the multinational force to learn the state of the infrastructure — electricity, sewage and garbage — and the residents' living conditions.

"It's a great way. When you put boots on the ground, you get

a much better sense of how the community is," he explained. "The people are a lot more receptive to you because they know you've taken the time to go visit them, to go out into the heat and go out into the danger of the city and see how they're living."

The mission has slowly changed over the last three months since the battalion arrived in Iraq, Swindell said. The INGs, then known as the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps, weren't actively questioning the residents then, he said. Now they are.

"Letting the INGs do this just adds to the overall transition of

**"In the past was no good life. Now everything is good, and I hope it change for good."**

— *Baghdad resident*

power — letting the Iraqis know the ING are in charge now," said Swindell.

ING soldiers questioned residents of about 40 homes that evening.

They asked what the power situation was, how often trash was collected and if the sewage was a problem.

The joint patrol handed out stickers and flags to the area children. Children asked for "chok-a-lata" and soft drinks. Their parents smiled and waved.

They spoke with the Soldiers, posed for photographs with them and thanked them for visiting.

Saddiyah is a relatively wealthy area of Al Rashid, said Sgt. Tim Buttz, a member of Swindell's platoon. Many of the

residents are middle or upper class. Some were in the old Iraqi military and continue to serve in the new Iraqi security forces. Others work in the national ministries downtown.

One man, an engineer in a government ministry, said he was aware of the many projects the multinational force has done for the area — soccer fields, playgrounds and sewage cleanup. The man, who asked not to be identified, went on to say he was hopeful about the handover of sovereignty that had taken place a few days before would be peaceful.

"I wish the future is very good for Iraqi peoples," the man said in broken English. "In the past was no good life. Now everything is good, and I hope it change for good."

For example, the man said, now people can buy cars, his salary is good and food prices are low.

For the future? He wants good projects to develop his community and country, he said.

The presence of American Soldiers is "very necessary" and "they remain here a long time," he said.

To Swindell and his Soldiers, it's the "face time" with the locals that counts the most. While patrolling, they play with the children and talk with adults.

Buttz, an Operation Desert Storm veteran, laughed as he passed out Iraq flags to children. "You've already got three of them!" he said to one.

These patrols are for the kids because "they're the future here," he said. The father of one back home said talking to the local



**An Iraqi National Guard Soldier talks with a resident of the Al Rashid District in Baghdad, Iraq, during an information-operations patrol the evening of July 1.**

children, even if they have little understanding of English, makes the deployment easier on him.

The locals, both children and adults, wave to the Soldiers during daytime patrols, but that changes at night.

"It's at night you never know what's going to happen," Buttz said. "But a lot of things have changed; it's not as bad as it was when we first got here."

Just three days before this mission, sovereignty was handed back to the Iraqis. Buttz said it has already helped calm down things. The neighborhood has more electricity now, the sewage

problems are being fixed and the residents realize they're in charge now, he noted.

"They see its happening now," Buttz explained. "They notice things are being done."

The IO missions will continue and eventually the ING will conduct them alone, Swindell said. At some point, the neighborhood will be safe enough that his unit and other units in the 1st Cavalry Division will transition from combat patrols to do more IO-type patrols, he explained.

"That's what everybody wants — less ambushes and more IO operations," Swindell said.



**Baghdad 92.3 FM**  
**107.7 FM**  
**Balad 107.3 FM**  
**Kirkuk 107.3 FM**  
**Mosul 105.1 FM**  
**Qayyarah 93.3 FM**  
**Sinjar 107.9 FM**  
**Tallil AB 107.3 FM**  
**Tikrit 93.3 FM**  
**Taji 107.7 FM**  
**Fallujah 105.1 FM**

## Shhhh!

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# Marine gunners test Kevlar shorts



**Lance Cpl. Mike C. Suchevecich, a gunner with Battery L, 3rd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, wears his lower-body armor. The shorts are made of Kevlar and were designed to repel shrapnel from improvised explosive devices.**

**Story and photo by  
Cpl. Paula M. Fitzgerald**  
1st Marine Division Public Affairs

**CAMP RAMADI, Iraq** — Marines here from 3rd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment are currently testing lower body armor developed by the Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory in Quantico, Va.

The Kevlar shorts were designed to repel razor-sharp shrapnel from improvised explosive devices detonated along transportation routes throughout the country.

According to Lt. Col. Lance A. McDaniel, the battalion's executive officer, the artillery unit received 10 pairs of the shorts from the Warfighting Lab. The shorts arrived in late June and were distributed among the battalion's batteries.

"The gunners in our vehicles seem to be the most exposed to shrapnel," McDaniel said. "We've had a lot of Marines receive injuries to their buttocks and upper thighs."

He said these shorts make the gunners, who man crew-served weapons on top of

the vehicles, less vulnerable to serious injury during IED attacks.

"The Marines wear flak jackets which protect their backs and chests," McDaniel said. "It only makes sense to have protection for the legs."

The one-size-fits-all shorts are worn over a Marine's uniform and are held up with built-in suspenders. Each pair of shorts weighs close to 5 pounds.

Lance Cpl. Mike C. Suchevecich and Pvt. Luis R. Mejia have both tried the shorts a few times.

"The other Marines made fun of me the first I put them on," Mejia said. "I guess they thought it was a joke. They are really funny looking."

The shorts have already acquired a few nicknames from the battalion. One Marine referred to them as "lederhosen," and others call them "fishing shorts."

Still, the two Marines said they are grateful to have the new gear.

"They're not very comfortable, and they're hard to move in," Suchevecich explained, "but I do feel a lot more protected than before, and that's definitely more important than comfort."

So far, the shorts have not been put to

the test during any attacks, but the Marines said they believe it's just a matter of time.

"I think all gunners should have a pair," Mejia said. "I feel safer wearing them. They can't stop bullets, but they can stop shrapnel."

Several of Mejia's fellow gunners have been wounded during IED attacks and he said he wants to avoid earning a Purple Heart here.

According to Mejia, the shorts take about a minute and a half to put on and the same to take off. He said if he could, he would make a few modifications.

"They're not too bad to wear," he said, "but if I could change anything, I would have quick-release straps for the suspenders."

He also said the pants fit comfortably around his waist, but they are too loose near his knees.

McDaniel said the Warfighting Lab will solicit input from the Marines for an undetermined amount of time.

"If the idea proves to be a success," McDaniel explained, "I suspect they will be mass produced and sent out throughout the Marine Corps."

## Soldiers produce beats from trailer

**Story and photo by Spc. Marie Whitney**  
122nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

**BAGHDAD, Iraq** — Sometimes, you have to bring your own fun.

"When it was time to come out here, I knew there wasn't going to be much going on for the year. And everyone else I knew was bringing their [video games] and stuff. So I took my tax return and bought myself a mixer, a keyboard and microphone," said Spc. Robert Burke of Headquarters Company, 1st Cavalry Division.

With this equipment, Burke set up a recording studio in his trailer at Camp Victory North here, out of which he and some of his friends from HHC, 1st Cav. Div. record music for their rap group, Eclectic.

Burke is the producer for the band, creating beats, recording the voice tracks and editing to create their final products. He said turning out a new beat every couple of days isn't a struggle; he has been creating beats back home since 2000.



**Spc. Robert "Sticky" Burke of Headquarters Company, 1st Cavalry Division looks for a good beat to freestyle to from the collection of beats he has created on his computer.**

"Everything has a certain mood to it," he said. "One night, I was going over the beats I had started in Kuwait and when we first got here to Iraq. You can hear the change in what I was feeling every time."

Burke's groupmates don't take for granted what he brings to the group in knowledge and talent.

"This guy's a genius," said Spc. Bryan Clark, the lyrical master of the group. "Every time we do a track, he'll get on here and find something that could be done better. So our material is always getting better and better."

But setting up the studio turned out to be a little more difficult than the members of Eclectic had originally thought.

"We would have had this going a long time ago, but when we first got here, we had a problem with the power situation," said the group's comic relief, Spc. Adrian Tucker. "We didn't have a transformer."

But they soon got a transformer, enabling them to finally set up their studio. Now, all they needed was some lyrics. Burke said that writing the lyrics for Eclectic's songs is a group effort.

"The writing of the songs is a culmination of everybody. But each one of us is naturally good at something, too," he said. "Clark will come up with a lot of ideas. And he can come up with some lyrics in a snap. I'll be feeling a certain way, and I won't be able to express it through words, so I'll make a beat for it, and Tucker keeps us motivated."

The members of the group, who have been working together for the last three months said they plan to put out a CD of their music during their time in Baghdad. They also intend to try to get their music played in the Morale Welfare and Recreation tent on Camp Victory North. And Clark plans to perform at the Equal Opportunity-sponsored talent show July 24.

To the three HHC Soldiers, creating music is a definite escape from long days at work.

"It's definitely a stress reliever," said Tucker.



**Spc. Adrian "Tuck" Tucker of Headquarters Company, 1st Cavalry Division freestyles on the mic in the studio of Spc. Robert "Sticky" Burke, also of HHC, 1st Cav. Div. Tucker, Burke and Spc. Bryan Clark have a rap group called Eclectic that they began while in Baghdad.**

But the members of Eclectic take their music seriously. When they sit down to work on their music, they're trying to improve on what they've been working on for a while, they said.

"It's always a work in progress," Burke said. "We talk about our lyrical content. We like what we do now, but we think we could come a little bit better from our hearts. It's not really a matter of if we can do it or not. It's if we try to do it or not."



# Bridging services, bridging nations

## Soldiers, Marines work with Iraqis on \$4 million Tikrit Bridge rebuilding

Story and photo by Spc. Joe Alger  
1st Infantry Division Public Affairs

**TIKRIT, Iraq** — Building bridges may not have been what the Soldiers of the 216th Engineer Battalion expected to be doing in Iraq, but with the help of Marines from 6th Engineer Support Battalion, they are participating in the \$4 million Tikrit Bridge rebuilding project here.

“Bridge work is an extension a little beyond our normal scope of activities,” said Maj. Wayne Moening, the 216th Engineer Battalion operations officer. “Usually, we’re more involved in road building, quality-of-life improvement, carpentry and force protection.”

While building bridges may not be their specialty, the Soldiers of the 216th were ready for the challenge.

“Building bridges is an engineer mission, so we’ll be up to the task whether it’s our primary job or not,” said Sgt. Todd Kristoff, the noncommissioned officer in charge of bridge inspections for the 216th Engineer Company. To aid them in the bridge-rebuilding process, the 216th Soldiers worked together with Marines from the 6th Engineer Support Battalion.

“We’ve conducted a few operations of bridges like this before,” said Marine



Soldiers from the 216th Engineer Battalion lower a piece of a ramp from the Tikrit Bridge in Tikrit, Iraq.

Staff Sgt. Martin Kenny, the staff NCOIC for Bridge Company Bravo, 6th Engineer Support Battalion. “We’re one of only two bridge companies in country right now, so we work with engineers who may not have as much experience on bridges. We’ve had good success working with them in the past.”

Kristoff said he’s confident this project will be no exception.

“The relationship between us and the

Corps is very strong. We should definitely be able to complete this job in time,” he said.

In addition to getting help from the Marines, the 216th Soldiers also received a three-day class on bridge building at Forward Operating Base Anaconda in Balad, Iraq, before beginning the project.

According to Sgt. 1st Class Abraham Johnson, the 216th Engineer Company

1st Platoon platoon sergeant, there was a manufacturer’s representative from the bridge company the engineers will be working with to answer any questions they had about the process. The Soldiers from the 216th have also been doing bridge maintenance lately to get familiarized with the manufacturer’s units.

Rebuilding the bridge will be a three-phase project, Johnson said.

The first part will be to move the temporary bridge that’s covering the holes in the main bridge now out of the way.

Next, Iraqi workers will place beams over the gaps and put the temporary bridge back in place to allow for two-lane traffic on the bridge.

“This is the main crossing over the Tigris river in this area,” Moening said. “It was bombed during the war, and we’re restoring it to eventually give back to the Iraqi people.” For now, the temporary bridge will provide the support for almost any military or civilian vehicle that needs to cross the bridge, he said.

The final phase of the project, Johnson said, will be for the engineer to return to the bridge site later in the year to lay asphalt in place of the temporary bridge.

## Soldiers arrive in Iraq to backfill 39th Brigade

Story and photo by  
Staff Sgt. Rebekah-mae Bruns  
39th Brigade Combat Public Affairs

**TAJI, Iraq** — Arkansas’ 39th Brigade Combat Team recently received nearly 150 replacements from the states to backfill units that have lost troops due to combat - and noncombat-related events.

“The reality is this: you’re in combat now,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Larry Isbell, the 39th Brigade



Pvt. Joshua Lunsford, of Dequeen, Ark., fills out paperwork along with other replacements upon arrival in Taji, Iraq.

command sergeant major, while briefing incoming Soldiers of their new surroundings.

The new Soldiers sat through a series of briefings that explained the rules of engagement, promotions, pay and theater-specific operations.

New arrivals to the Baghdad International Airport were “welcomed” with incoming mortar fire July 2. Mortar rounds impacted on the base as Soldiers moved off the plane single file, gathering on the flight line for further instructions.

The freshly arrived Soldiers grabbed their gear as Isbell, who came to greet them, directed troops to scatter in an effort to prevent casualties.

“People, now would be the time to disperse,” Isbell said.

Pfc. Ryan Thackeray, 19, of Corvallis, Ore., was briefed on the flight line that the mortar attacks were nothing new.

“It was definitely something to fear,” said Thackeray, who is catching up to his company after being left behind in Fort Hood, Texas, on medical hold for a broken ankle. “It was what I was expecting, but I wasn’t expecting it so soon.”

In the first week after their arrival, the Soldiers were slated to requalify on their weapons and receive further training on convoy, close-quarter combat operations and clearing buildings before being released to their new units.





# 'Thund-Her-Struck' strikes Camp Eagle

**Story and photos by  
Spc. Andy Miller**  
122nd Mobile Public  
Affairs Detachment

**BAGHDAD, Iraq** — First Team Soldiers at Camp War Eagle here took a break July 2 when entertainers from the United States stopped by to perform as part of an Independence Day holiday Morale, Welfare and Recreation tour.

Under a bright summer sun, hundreds of 1st Brigade Soldiers crowded around the stage they had built in front of the 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment (Task Force Lancer) headquarters to listen to the jokes of comedian Dan Smith and the rock 'n' roll sounds of Thund-Her-Struck, an all-female AC/DC - tribute band from Los Angeles.

The entertainers said it was an honor for them to entertain the troops at War Eagle, which is located in one of the most dangerous areas of Baghdad. Smith, who has family in the military, said that he always requests to do shows in areas like this one when on an MWR tour.

"Wherever it's hot, wherever it's dangerous, that's where I request to go," he said. "I know those are the guys that need it most."

When the women of Thund-Her-Struck heard they were going to Camp War Eagle, said their manager, Dwayne Ulloa, he told them to be prepared for anything and everything. The band wasn't deterred by the idea of going into a combat zone, though.

"[I said], 'I can tell you that I know the military doesn't mess around when it comes to our safety, and they are going to do their utmost to provide us as much safety and security as they can. But we're going into the belly of the beast, so to speak,'" Ulloa, the event promoter, told the band. "And [the band members] put their flak jackets and their Kevlar helmets on and hopped in the 'copter,

and said, 'Let's go rock their world'."

At the show, Soldiers were set to rock 'n' roll as they crowded around the front of the stage, pumping their fists in the air, some of them singing along. Between songs, band members passed out T-Shirts and compact discs and joked with Soldiers in the crowd. All the while, Camp Eagle Soldiers were getting a break from the rigors of life in a combat zone.

"I think it was real good for everybody," said Sgt. 1st Class Timothy Gordon, a platoon sergeant with Company C, 2-5 Cav. "It was a nice break for everybody. We got to just chill out for a little bit and kind of forget about everything."

After playing a full set of classic AC/DC tunes, Task Force Lancer Commander Lt. Col. Gary Volesky went on stage to present the comedian and band members with certificates of appreciation. Then, following an encore performance, the band members stayed well into the night to sign autographs for Soldiers who lined up for a chance to meet with them.

Sgt. Michael Philips, a gunner with Task Force Lancer's Outlaws platoon, asked the members of Thund-Her-Struck to add their signatures to the guitar he'd brought from home.

"I've always been a music buff. Everything is guitar orientated. I know a lot about guitars, different people, what they play, what their strings are, what their amps are and their settings," Philips said. "I thought it was kind of neat...I can say I have all their signatures on my guitar. That guitar's value could go up."

Stephanie Leigh, the Thund-Her-Struck drummer, said the show was the most interesting she's ever played. Her band is accustomed to playing at Los Angeles night clubs and indoor entertainment venues. She said coming to Camp Eagle was a way for the band to

show respect to Soldiers serving in Iraq.

"We've done several different tours, like to the Balkans and stuff, but when you're asked to come to Iraq to play for the troops, it's like, oh, you have to think about that for a second," Leigh

said. "But it's an honor to come out.

[These Soldiers] spend so much time out here, doing what [they] do for our country, that for us to come out and entertain and do such a small stint, it's an honor. [These Soldiers] totally rock!"



**Stephanie Leigh, the Thunder-Her-Struck drummer, performs for Soldiers at Camp War Eagle in eastern Baghdad, Iraq, as part of a Morale, Welfare and Recreation tour to celebrate the U.S. independence holiday in Iraq.**



**Above: Soldiers hold up signs around the stage as members from the all-female band Thund-Her-Struck belt out AC/DC cover tunes at Camp War Eagle.**

**Right: Thunder-Her-Struck singer Dyna Shirasaki tosses out compact discs to Soldiers at Camp War Eagle during a July 2 concert.**

